

A Partnership for the Future:

The Alabama Forestry Commission and The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund

By Deron Lacey, Alabama Forestry Commission

Since 1996, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) has worked closely with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (Federation/LAF) Rural Research and Development Center in Epes, Alabama to deliver much needed technical information and services to Alabama's low-income landowners in rural communities.

Minority Outreach is a strategic goal of the Alabama Forestry Commission, and in the past few years it has been one of the most aggressive state forestry agencies in the south in identifying and providing technical assistance to minority and underserved landowners. Since 1967 the Federation has continued to educate and inform landowners in rural commu-

nities across the Southeastern United States. With a current membership including over 12,000 rural landowners, the Federation/LAF brings to the AFC opportunities to help landowners restore, manage, maintain and/or develop their forestland.

Education and Technical Assistance

One of the tools used in the AFC/Federation partnership to inform and educate landowners about available programs is seminars on proven forestland management techniques. Workshop topics during 2003 included permanent firebreaks, estate planning, and prescribed burning.

A permanent firebreak seminar was taught by Autauga AFC County Manager, John Pirtle. Information provided included: the merits of permanent firebreaks, firebreak construction, property access using permanent firebreaks, and a live demonstration of firebreak construction.

An estate planning seminar entitled "The Importance of Securing Your Estate for the Next Generation" covered heir property, allocating assets to heirs and potential consequences, current tax laws, and alternatives to estate planning. Michelle Cole of Diversified Forest Operations, LLC, and Miessha Thomas of the Federation/LAF were among the instructors who provided information and answered questions from concerned landowners.

During the Forestry Tour, the topics addressed were natural pine stand management, nature trail/pond management, silvopasturing with meat goats, reforestation and wildlife, and sustainable agriculture.

The Forestry Commission also hosted a week-long forestry camp in 2003 for ninth through twelfth graders across the state. The camp originated in 1997 and was designed for students interested in pursuing a career and/or education in the field of forestry. The camp featured visits to Gulf States Corporation's Westervelt Lodge and Sawmill, Moundville Archeological Park, and Charles A. Farquhar State Cattle Ranch. A College and Career night was held where college recruiters and industry professionals were on hand to discuss forestry and answer questions students had about different occupational and educational requirements. The AFC's outreach foresters directed the camp.



In 2003, ninth through twelfth grade students from across the state interested in pursuing a career and/or education in the field of forestry participated in a week-long forestry camp.

Transfer of Information for Success

The Federation assists landowners – who may know little about forestry and forest management – through the process of forest management practices before they acquire the technical support of a professional forester. This education allows them to be more able to set goals and manage their property to their personal satisfaction.

One of the areas the Federation/LAF has been involved in is landowner education in the area of silvopasture for goat production. This includes the feasibility of a marketing co-op for the sale of goats, appropriate goat-fencing techniques, and meat goat production. Managing for goats can provide several benefits including the control of many of the invasive and noxious weeds that grow in young timber stands and on idle land. Goats can be rented out for use on other fenced tracts or sold when they reach marketable age. Goat by-products such as chevron (goat meat) and manure also can be marketed, offering economically distressed landowners options they can begin to use immediately.

The Federation also assists landowners in the areas of property values, site-specific crop selection, wildlife management, goal setting and accomplishment, where to go for technical and financial assistance, and harvesting and marketing timber. The Federation has published several brochures on topics such as “What Every Landowner Should Know” and “Land Loss Prevention Training Manuals” which inform landowners of the legal rights and obligations involved in land management. They also have brochures available covering the following topics: Adverse Possession, Basic Information on Real Property, How to Find a Deed, How to Select a Lawyer, Mineral Rights, Tax Sales, and Wills and Estate Planning. Many problems landowners face stem from a lack of information regarding the possible opportunities available to them. The Federation/LAF’s expertise in working with landowners in the southeast is critical for the implementation of these forums and the dissemination of useful land management and general self-sufficiency information to individuals, families, and communities within Alabama.



AFC Outreach Forester Lakedra Byrd demonstrates paper making for students and teachers at the Ujima Math and Science Fair in Birmingham.

Reaching Out

In 2003, the Commission created and produced a publication totally dedicated to Minority Outreach. This 12-page full-color booklet gave a history of the working partnership between the Commission and the Federation, outlined the goals of the Minority Outreach Program, and featured minority landowner success stories.

State Forester Timothy C. Boyce continues to work closely with the Outreach Advisory Council he created in reaching landowners and identifying areas of both concern and success in the area of minority landowner outreach.

As the old saying goes, “a problem is only as great as its most simple solution.” Together with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, the Alabama Forestry Commission is offering solutions which empower landowners in our state to be as good as they can be, today, and in the future.

For more information about the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, their services or other topics, call Gus Townes, Alabama Forestry Commission, at (334) 240-9320; or Amadou Diop (AH-muh-doo DEE-opp), Federation of Southern Cooperatives, (205) 652-9676; or contact your county Alabama Forestry Commission office. ♣

Upcoming Tour

ALABAMA PROVISIONAL CHAPTER - THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION

The Alabama Provisional Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation is sponsoring a tour featuring the American chestnut experimental work of Dr. Jim Maddox. The tour will be held at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Research Farm on Second Street in Muscle Shoals, AL, from 1:00 – 3:00 pm on Saturday, September 25, 2004. This tour is free and open to the public.

Dr. Maddox is a plant physiologist and has worked for the TVA for 29 years. He began working on American chestnut silviculture about ten years ago and started a breeding program in 2003. Dr. Maddox has an agreement with The American Chestnut Foundation in which he has access to the Foundation’s genetic material.

For more information about the tour, contact Dr. Maddox at 256-386-3096; Les Tate at lr Tate@comcast.net, 256-764-5608; or Kathy Wallace at kwallace@fs.fed.us, 205-489-3712, ext. 133. ♣